



# Check-List of Canadian Public Documents

LAWRENCE J. BURPEE



Reprinted from  
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA—PAPERS, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1-2, 1914



## CHECK-LIST OF CANADIAN PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

BY LAWRENCE J. BURPEE

Two years ago a committee was appointed by the Ontario Library Association to prepare a Check-List of Canadian Public Documents. For one reason or another very little progress has yet been made with the undertaking—not an altogether unusual state of affairs with subcommittees. The members have all been pretty well occupied with other matters, and it has been difficult to get together. However, the project has not been abandoned by any means, and we hope some day to get the material for the Check-List into shape and have it printed for distribution.

Meanwhile, it may not be without interest to give a brief account of the public documents of Canada and the provinces. At the outset, it is important to remember that under the terms of the British North America Act (the Canadian Constitution), certain subjects were definitely assigned to the provinces and others to the Dominion. Generally speaking, the Constitution of Canada differs from that of the United States in that under the former Parliament may legislate "in relation to all matters not coming within the classes of subjects assigned exclusively to the legislatures of the provinces," while under the latter "the powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the

Z 1373

886

States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." One may perhaps say that, from this particular point of view, the balance of power in Canada rests with the federal authority, while in the United States it remains with the individual states.

Under the Canadian Constitution the federal government has exclusive legislative authority over all matters respecting the public debt, regulation of trade and commerce, postal service, navigation and shipping, Indians, census and statistics, and all other matters of national import and significance; while the local legislatures may exclusively make laws in relation to municipal institutions, management and sale of public lands belonging to the province, incorporation of companies with provincial objects, property, and civil rights in the province, and "generally all matters of a merely local or private nature in the province." (I am quoting Bourinot, our principal authority on constitutional and parliamentary law.)

The matter may perhaps be put more concisely, from our present standpoint, by giving a list of the existing departments of the Dominion government and of the provinces. Here at Ottawa we have the departments of Finance, Railways and Canals, Public Works, Marine and Fisheries, Naval Affairs, Post Office, Militia and Defence, Agriculture, Trade and Commerce, Customs, Inland Revenue, Justice, Interior Mines, Indian Affairs, State, External Affairs, Labour, and the Privy Council Office. The President of the Council, who is generally

VTABOR JAYOR  
ADABAO

the Prime Minister, controls the Department of External Affairs and this Privy Council Office, and also the Royal North West Mounted Police. Interior and Indian Affairs are under one Cabinet Minister; so are Marine and Fisheries and Naval Affairs; also Inland Revenue and Mines. The Geological Survey is a subdepartment of the latter. Until a year or two ago the departments of Labour and the Post Office were under one Minister. They are now administered by separate members of the cabinet. The Dominion Archives, Census, Patent Office, Copyright Office, and Experimental Farms are or were all under the Department of Agriculture—rather a heterogeneous collection. The Archives have since been transferred to the Department of State. The National Gallery comes, for some unexplained reason, under the Department of Public Works; and the Victoria Museum is connected with the Geological Survey. All these departments and branches issue annual reports, as well as a large number of bulletins and other special publications, all commonly known as Blue Books. They are issued through the office of the King's Printer, the Printing Bureau being under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State. The Parliamentary Debates, or Hansard as it is generally called; also the Journals of the House and Senate; the Votes and Proceedings of Parliament; the Sessional Papers; Reports of Parliamentary Committees, and other purely parliamentary publications are issued through the Joint Distribution Office.

Reference may be made here to the brief descriptive list of Canadian government publications on p. 396 of Larned's *Literature of American History*. From a bibliographical point of view Canada is a long way behind the United States. We have nothing at all corresponding to the admirable catalogues and indexes of public documents issued by the Superintendent of Documents at Washington. The King's Printer issues a brief list of Dominion publications, but it does not make any pretense of being complete. Many years ago an Index was published to the Sessional Papers, but that is now almost prehistoric, and it is altogether like hunting for a needle in a haystack to find any particular document, not to mention any particular fact, in the innumerable volumes of the Sessional Papers. Some of us are living in hopes that the government may some day realize the wisdom of having an index prepared to what would then be a collection of material of enormous value to the student of Canadian affairs. Each volume of Hansard, or rather the set of volumes for each session, is provided with a fairly complete and satisfactory index. Of the departmental reports, nothing is available from a bibliographical point of view beyond the two General Indexes to the Reports of the Geological Survey, the first covering the years 1863 to 1884, and the second the years 1885 to 1906. The latter, compiled by F. J. Nicolas, is an excellent piece of work. As the special report of 1863 summarized all previous reports from the organization of the Survey, and Vol. XVI of the New Series, issued in 1906,

was the last of the Annual Reports, these two General Indexes furnish a fairly complete key to the Reports. Since 1906, the Survey has issued all its publications in the form of Bulletins, and no doubt a general index to these will be issued at some future time.

Broadly speaking, the nine provinces into which Canada is now divided all have jurisdiction over the same classes of subjects, but for obvious reasons the departments dealing with these subjects vary in the different provinces. Subjects which in a large and wealthy province like Ontario are assigned to distinct departments, are bulked two and three together in a small and necessarily frugal little province like Prince Edward Island. Similarly, the public documents issued by the larger provinces are more numerous, specialized, and valuable than those of the smaller provinces. Generally speaking, the methods of publication and distribution in the provinces are similar to those of the Dominion. Each province has its own King's Printer, through whom public documents may be obtained, sometimes free, otherwise for a nominal charge. It may be convenient to add that the address of the King's Printer for Ontario is Toronto; for Quebec, the city of Quebec; for New Brunswick, Fredericton; for Nova Scotia, Halifax; for Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown; for Manitoba, Winnipeg; for Saskatchewan, Regina; for Alberta, Edmonton; and for British Columbia, Victoria. The very few documents issued in connection with the government of the Yukon District may be obtained in some cases from the King's

Printer at Ottawa; otherwise, through the Commissioner's Office in Dawson.

It is the hope of the Subcommittee on Documents of the Ontario Library Association that they may be able to submit, at some future meeting of the American Library Association, a fairly comprehensive Check-List of the Dominion and Provincial documents roughly indicated above.

